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CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for breeding tomato plants that produce tomatoes with reduced fruit water content comprising the steps of:
  - 5 crossing at least one *Lycopersicon esculentum* plant with a *Lycopersicon* spp. to produce hybrid seed;
  - collecting the first generation of hybrid seeds;
  - growing plants from the first generation of hybrid seeds;
  - pollinating the plants of the most recent hybrid generation;
  - 10 collecting the seeds produced by the most recent hybrid generation;
  - growing plants from the seeds of the most recent hybrid generation;
  - allowing plants to remain on the vine past the point of normal ripening; and
  - screening for reduced fruit water content as indicated by extended preservation of the ripe fruit and wrinkling of the fruit skin.
- 15 2. The method according to claim 1 wherein the steps of pollinating, collecting the seeds, and growing plants are repeated at least once.
3. The method according to claim 1 wherein the step of pollinating includes self pollination.
4. The method according to claim 1 wherein the step of pollination includes back crossing  
20 with a *Lycopersicon esculentum* plant.
5. The method according to claim 1 wherein the *Lycopersicon* spp plant is a *Lycopersicon hirsutum* plant.
6. The method according to claim 1 and additionally comprising the steps of:
  - crossing plants derived from hybrid seeds whose progeny show reduced fruit water  
25 content with a *Lycopersicon* plant;
  - growing the crossed plants; and
  - selecting plants with tomato fruits having an increased dry weight percentage as compared to fruit from a non-crossed *Lycopersicon*.
7. The method according to claim 6 wherein the steps of crossing and selecting are  
30 repeated at least once.
8. The method according to claims 1 wherein said crossing includes sexual crossing.
9. The method according to claims 1 wherein said crossing includes asexual crossing.

10. The method according to claim 9 wherein said asexual crossing includes somatic cell hybridization.

11. The method according to claim 1 and additionally comprising the step of propagating the plants with tomato fruits having the desired characteristics.

5 12. The method according to claim 11 wherein the step of propagating includes the step of vegetative propagation.

13. The method according to claim 11 wherein the step of propagating includes the step of propagation by seed.

10 14. The method according to claim 1 and additionally comprising the steps of:  
crossing plants derived from hybrid seeds whose progeny show reduced fruit water content with a *Lycopersicon* plant;  
growing the crossed plants;  
harvesting ripe tomato fruits before signs of dehydration thereof; and  
allowing the fruits to dehydrate after removal from the plant.

15 15. A tomato fruit characterized by a capability of natural dehydration while on a tomato plant, natural dehydration being defined as wrinkling of skin of the tomato fruit when the fruit is allowed to remain on the plant after a normal ripe harvest stage, said natural dehydration being generally unaccompanied by microbial spoilage.

20 16. A tomato fruit characterized by an untreated skin which permits dehydration of the fruit so as to obtain wrinkling of the skin, said dehydration being generally unaccompanied by microbial spoilage.